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SUBJECT: GEORGIA: ESTABLISHMENT OF RUSSIAN INTERESTS
SECTION IN TBILISI

¶1. (SBU) On March 5, Georgia and Russia established interests sections in the Swiss embassies in Moscow and Tbilisi, respectively. In Tbilisi, Russian diplomats will continue to operate in the Russian Embassy building they occupied before the war; however, the building will be under a Swiss flag. The interests sections, established on March 4 with an exchange of notes between Russian and Swiss diplomats in Moscow and Georgian and Swiss diplomats in Tbilisi, confirmed the opening of interests sections in both capital cities. Swiss Deputy Chief of Mission Dr. Anita Schluchter Roth told poloff that Swiss representatives completed the necessary preparations to implement the agreement following official visits by Federal Councilor Micheline Calmy-Rey, head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to Moscow in mid-December and to Tbilisi in mid-January.

¶2. (SBU) According to Swiss Ambassador Amberg, the Russian Interests Section will be headed by the Russian Embassy's former DCM Andrei Smaga, who he noted has remained in Tbilisi since the conflict. Amberg cautioned that Swiss diplomats would have no involvement with activities ongoing within the Russian Interests Section. In Tbilisi, the Russian Interests Section will issue visas to travel to Russia only to Georgians with close family members living in Russia, Georgians studying in Russia and for several other limited categories.

TEFFT